



YSEALI YOUunified 2021

A Guide to Planning a Community Service Activity

The Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) is the U.S. government's signature program to strengthen leadership development and networking in Southeast Asia. Through a variety of programs and engagements, YSEALI seeks to build the leadership capabilities of youth in the region, strengthen ties between the United States and Southeast Asia, and nurture a community of leaders who work across borders to solve shared issues.

YOUunified ("youth" and "unified") is an annual community service campaign held around December 3rd to commemorate YSEALI's anniversary and to celebrate the strength and potential of YSEALI members. YOUunified demonstrates YSEALI members' ingenuity in creating solutions to shared community and regional challenges.

Like last year, YOUunified 2021 will take place during the entire month of December.

Restrictions due to COVID-19 may limit in-person community service activities, but there are still ways to be involved. Consider holding a virtual activity, such as a virtual panel discussion or a social media campaign, to raise awareness on a particular issue.

YOUunified activities should be safe and follow local laws and regulations regarding your country's COVID-19 situation and restrictions.

Your YOUunified activity can take many forms and this guide will assist you in planning and running a successful activity that aligns your interests with your community's needs. This toolkit is intended for use by individuals, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), school clubs, community groups, or businesses in organizing a YOUunified activity.

In the following sections, you will find helpful prompts for thinking about how to organize an activity: the type of activity you would like to hold, the logistics, and opportunities for continuing to engage after your activity. You may want to read through the toolkit in its entirety so that you have a good idea of the process, and then work through section by section as you plan your activity.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

[The Basics](#)

[Step 1: Define the activity](#)

[Step 2: Plan Logistics](#)

[Step 3: Promote Your Activity and Recruit Volunteers](#)

[Step 4: Conduct the Activity](#)

[Step 5: Follow Up After Your YSEALI Activity](#)

[Suggested Timeline](#)



The Basics

- YOUNIFIED 2021 will be held during the entire month of December.
- YOUNIFIED activities should be safe and follow local laws regarding your country's COVID-19 situation and restrictions. Consider holding virtual activities or social media campaigns to raise awareness on a particular topic.
- Register your activity at:
<https://padlet.com/youngsoutheastasianleaders/younified2021>
Registering your activity can help promote it and reach new volunteers. Please note that your events will be verified by our YSEALI Coordinators and will appear on Padlet if they have been approved. If it does not appear on Padlet, that means that unfortunately your event did not meet the requirements.
- YOUNIFIED activity organizers who register are eligible to receive a YOUNIFIED certificate upon successful completion of the activity.
- YOUNIFIED activities must be free of charge (no admittance or registration fee for participants or volunteers).
- Use the hashtags #YSEALI and #YOUNIFIED to promote your activity.
- Check out: <https://asean.usmission.gov/yseali/yseali-younified/> for more information and graphics for YOUNIFIED 2021

Thank You!

YSEALI is a strong and vibrant community thanks to the hard work and dedication of young leaders like you. Thank you for your interest in organizing a YOUNIFIED activity. Continue to engage with the YSEALI Network and be sure to follow the YSEALI Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/yseali>) for more opportunities for young Southeast Asian leaders.



Step 1: Define the Activity

Having a written purpose and goal for your YOUNIFIED activity will make it much easier to take each step with a clear vision for what you need to accomplish. This planning step is also a great opportunity to think about existing groups or organizations you could work with to make your activity an even bigger success. Be sure to think through the following prompts before moving on to planning.

What is the Need?

Use your existing understanding of your community and its needs as a guide and be sure to talk to community leaders and advocates about what they believe would be most beneficial. Think about what are the needs of your community that you would like to address?

- Awareness on critical topics, including, but not limited to, civic engagement, health, governance, entrepreneurship, or human rights
- Community space maintenance (park, beach, school, etc.)
- Improved public safety (public hygiene, pedestrian safety, etc.)
- Hands-on/skills-based training
- Other

Define the Activity:

Based on the community need you would like to fill, think about what type of activity would be best to conduct.

- Is it safe and permissible to do an in-person activity? Would a virtual activity be a safer choice?
- Awareness campaign (can be virtual)
- School or community space clean up (trash pick-up, painting, planting flowers, etc.)
- Workshop on a topic at a school or community space (can be virtual)
- Donation drive
- Social media messaging campaign
- Other

Create a Mission Statement:



Include the need you will serve, the activities you will perform, and the people who will benefit. For example: *As part of my YSEALI YOUNIFIED activity, I will host a virtual panel on health where women can receive health information for themselves and their children, because many women in my community do not have easy access to a doctor.*

Set a Goal for Your Activity:

Consider the outcome (impact that you want to have) as well as the output (number of people you will train, the total area you will clean up, or the number of trees you will plant, etc.). Make sure your goals are SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound).

- What is your specific goal for the activity?
- How will you measure the impact of your activity?

Identify Potential Partners:

Working with another person or an existing group will reduce the burden of organizing an activity. Working with a group also will give you a ready pool of volunteers, rather than having to recruit people to participate. Are you already involved with a community service group that could help support the activity?

- No (continue to the next question)
- Yes
 - Name of the group
 - Contact information

Would you like to partner with another individual or group to plan the activity? If so, consider the following:

- Research potential partners: Try to select an individual or group who has an existing interest in the topic your activity will be covering.
- Use your network: See if you have any connections who can introduce you to the individual or group since you're more likely to be successful if there is a personal connection.
- Prepare for the first meeting: Especially if you will be contacting someone with whom you don't have an existing relationship, prepare a letter or script to introduce yourself and the activity you would like to plan together. The donor letter template in this guide can be adjusted for this purpose.
- If the partner is interested in working together, set a time for your first planning meeting and complete the remaining steps together:
 - Name



- Contact information
- Date/time of planning meeting

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)

Step 2: Plan the Logistics

Setting the logistics is where you really get into planning the specifics of your activity. You'll want to think through factors such as where and when you'll hold the activity and if it should be in-person or virtual. Also consider how many volunteers you need and whether there are any resources you need to hold the activity. If you are in touch with your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate, you could reach out to your contact to ask about holding the activity in an American Space.

Select a Venue/Format:

The type of activity you are holding and your country's COVID-19 situation and restrictions will determine if it should be in-person or virtual (and if in-person, the best place to conduct it). For example, if you are holding a virtual discussion to raise awareness, you'll need to consider the best online platform for the audience.

If it is safe and permissible to hold an in-person event, think about what safety equipment will be needed (masks, hand sanitizer, etc.) and how to ensure proper social distancing. If you are planting trees, you'll need to find an outdoor space where the trees will be able to grow. If you are holding an in-person activity, you may have options such as a local school, library, or community center. Your workplace or another local business also might have space you can use.

Where and How Will You Hold Your Activity?

- Virtual?
- In-person?
 - School
 - Workplace
 - Library
 - Community center
 - Health clinic
 - American Space/American Corner
 - Outdoor space



- Other

Considerations for a Virtual Activity:

If you are not able to hold an in-person activity due to the COVID-19 situation in your country and/or local laws/restrictions on in-person gatherings, consider holding a virtual event. You could hold a virtual panel discussion or a social media campaign to raise awareness on a particular issue. You should still consider what community need you can meet through a virtual event, what your mission statement will be, and who is your audience. In addition, you should also consider:

- What is the best medium to use to reach your audience (Social media? Print media? Radio? Television?)
- For social media events or campaigns, what is the best platform to reach your audience?
- For virtual activities, consider if your audience has reliable Internet access.
- If planning a virtual panel discussion, try not to have more than three panelists.
- Will your virtual activity be a live event or recorded? For a live event, will a recording be available later for those who were not able to attend the live event?
- Think of ways to make the virtual activity interactive (Q&A sessions, breakout rooms, icebreakers, polls or games).
- Think of how to promote your virtual event on social media before, during, and after to reach a larger audience.

Determine How Many Volunteers/Participants You Need:

Depending on the type of activity you are holding and your goals for the activity, you will need to estimate the number of volunteers required to accomplish that goal. If you are running a health awareness campaign, you will need volunteers to help you share information. If you are organizing a workshop (either virtual or in-person), you may not need any volunteers, but you will need participants to attend the session. If you are holding an outdoor activity, what is your back-up plan in case of rain?

Confirm the Date:

YOUNIFIED activities should take place in December 2021.

Set the Time:

The type of activity you are planning will dictate how long the activity should be. If you are holding a virtual activity, you may want to have a two-hour session. However, if you are planting trees or cleaning a beach, you may want to hold it all day. Also consider when your volunteers or audience will be available. Do you need to accommodate work or school schedules?

- Duration



- Time

Identify Resource Needs:

Think through the supplies and other resources you will need for your activity. This could include things like trash bags and gloves for a beach cleanup, or Wi-Fi access if you are facilitating a virtual activity.

Resources might include:

- Computer
- Projector
- Internet access
- Face masks
- Hand sanitizer
- Information flyers or publications
- Signs or banners
- Trash bags
- Gloves
- Paint, brushes, rollers, and other painting supplies
- Trees to plant
- Shovels
- Water/refreshments for volunteers/ participants
- Name tags for volunteers/participants
- Pens and notepads
- Other

Brainstorm Potential Donors:

Some types of activities may be more resource-intensive than others, but that doesn't mean you'll need to spend a lot of money to hold your activity. Local groups or businesses may be willing to donate materials for your activity. If you end up needing to buy materials, think through how you will raise the money to do so. You may be able to solicit donations from local groups or businesses.

Who might be interested in donating or lending resources? Consider the following suggestions:

- Employer
- Printing shop
- Plant nursery
- Hardware store
- Local clinic or hospital
- Paint store



- Grocer or market
- School or university
- Other

Reach Out to Potential Donors:

Once you have an idea of the local groups or businesses that might be interested in donating resources for your activity, you'll need to reach out and make a pitch for them to contribute. As part of your pitch, you'll need to specify exactly what you are asking them to provide, as well as why your activity is important and how their donation can make a difference. Lastly, you can indicate what they will receive in return for their donation — such as a mention at the activity. Even if someone declines to donate, be sure to thank them for their time. For each donor, consider:

- What exactly are you asking them to provide?
- What can you offer them?
 - Thanking them during your introductory speech
 - Displaying their logo at the activity
 - Including their company name on printed materials
 - Other

Sample Letter:

Dear _____,

My name is _____ and I am hoping you can help me improve (indicate the need targeted by your activity) in our community. Specifically, I am hoping you can contribute (note what you would like them to donate/provide) for an upcoming activity.

As you may know, (share a fact or statistic that supports why you are holding your activity). I would like to improve this situation and I am organizing a community service activity (time, date, location, in-person/virtual) as part of the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) YOUNIFIED community service campaign. At the activity we will, (include details of your activity).

I would greatly appreciate it if you would get involved with this activity by donating (reiterate what you would like them to donate), which will allow us to (note specifically what the donation will be used for). We would also be happy to have you and/or members of your staff



participate, if you are interested in doing so. In gratitude of your donation, we can (mention what you are offering in return).

Thank you very much for considering this request.

(Signature)

Keep Track of Donations:

Be sure to keep track of who donates for your activity so that you can thank them appropriately. A table can help you record who has donated or lent various resources.

Resource	Donated/Lent By:

Further Reading:

Learn about recruiting a celebrity to participate in your activity: <https://share.america.gov/how-to-attract-celebrity-to-your-cause/>

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)



Step 3: Promote Your Activity and Recruit Volunteers

Depending on the details, promoting your activity may entail recruiting volunteers and/or participants. You may also want to make sure the larger community knows about the activity. For example, are you organizing a donation drive and need people to donate materials?

Recruit Volunteers:

Think through both the number of volunteers you need to support your activity (identified previously) and any particular skills you would like them to have. What groups of people would be best to recruit from for your specific needs? How can you best reach them and entice them to participate? If you are in touch with your local U.S. Embassy or Consulate, reach out to your contact to discuss ways the U.S. Embassy/Consulate could promote your activity. If the activity is being planned by a business or organization, as opposed to an individual, you have a ready-made pool of volunteers. Be sure to look to employees or group members first!

What Skills Would You Like Volunteers to Have?

- Technical skills
- Ability to do physical labor
- Comfortable talking to others
- Medical training
- Administrative skills
- Other

Where Can You Recruit Volunteers?

- School/university, including volunteer groups or clubs
- Work
- Community group
- Local clinic or hospital
- Social media networks



- Resident associations
- WhatsApp group
- Local business(es)
- Local NGO
- Other

What is the Best Way to Reach this Potential Volunteer Population?

- Flyers
- Email
- Social media posts
- Face-to-face meeting
- Other

What Messaging Can You Use to Encourage Volunteers to Participate?

- You'll be helping those less fortunate in the community
- We all have a responsibility to share our knowledge and talents
- Volunteering is good experience for your resume
- A notable person from the community will be participating
- The activity is a good networking opportunity
- Other

How Will People Register to Volunteer?

- Email
- Phone call
- Social media
- WhatsApp group
- Other

Organize Volunteers:

Planning out your activity in advance will ensure it runs smoothly. Complete the following planning tasks and communicate with volunteers in advance so they know what to expect.

- Create a schedule.
- Depending on the number of volunteers and the activities being conducted, consider breaking volunteers into small groups.
- Break large tasks down into smaller pieces and ensure that each volunteer or group of volunteers has a task that can be completed within the timeframe of the activity. People want to feel that they completed something.



- If you know volunteers' skills, assign tasks that they are best suited for; if you don't know their skills, allow people to select the tasks they will most enjoy.
- If your activity will be large, designate leaders among the volunteers and hold a brief planning/orientation session with them to prepare for the big day.
- Contact volunteers in advance to provide them with the information you have identified above. Be sure they know when and where to arrive, and provide information about what they will be doing during the day. This communication could be sent via email, social media, WhatsApp, or another communication channel.

Advertise to Inform the Community:

You'll want to help get the word out about your activity to attract those community members you are intending to serve and to make sure the community is aware and knows how to get involved. Think about who would be most interested in attending and how to reach them.

Is the Activity Intended for a Specific Demographic?

- Students
- Specific age range
- Speakers of a specific language
- Residents of a particular location
- Other
- No specific demographic — everyone is welcome

Where to Advertise?

- Schools/universities
- Community centers
- Social media networks
- Resident associations
- Local businesses
- Other

What is the Best Way to Reach this Potential Volunteer Population?

- Flyers
- Email
- Social media posts
- Face-to-face meeting
- Other



Do Participants Need to Register in Advance to Attend?

- Yes (Be sure your promotional materials include information about how to register!)
- No

Notify the Media:

Community service projects make great human interest stories and the local media may be interested in covering your activity in advance, day-of, or after the fact. Be sure to reach out to any local media to let them know about the activity and ask if they would cover it.

What Local Media Might Be Interested in the Activity?

- TV station
- Radio station
- Online publication
- Daily newspaper
- Weekly newspaper
- Community newsletter
- Other

Don't Forget:

If people register in advance for the activity, be sure to send them a reminder notification (via email, WhatsApp, social media, etc.) a few days before the activity. Don't forget to send a reminder to your volunteers too!

Further Reading:

Learn tips for planning an activity that volunteers will enjoy: <https://share.america.gov/it-takes-grit-to-help-volunteers-have-fun/>

Learn some of the benefits of volunteering, which you can use in your messaging to potential volunteers: <https://share.america.gov/4-ways-volunteering-benefits-you/>

Learn about getting people to participate in your efforts: <https://share.america.gov/5w-tips-for-building-successful-campaign/>

[*Return to the Table of Contents*](#)



Step 4: Conduct the Activity

After weeks of planning, it's finally here! All your hard work will pay off in big benefits to your community. The following prompts will help you ensure the activity goes smoothly and that not only do you achieve your goals, but that volunteers and participants have a great time as well.

1-2 Days in Advance:

- **Double-check Your To-Do List:** A day or two before the activity, do a final check to make sure you've completed all the planning steps and that you have all your supplies on-hand and ready to go. It might help to make a schedule for the day of the activity, especially if you have tasks that need to be completed by you and your volunteers before participants arrive (setting up computer, posting signs, receiving materials, etc.).
- **Remind Participants and Volunteers:** Use Facebook, WhatsApp, email, etc. to remind your participants, community, and volunteers about your activity advance.

Day of the Activity:

- **Relax!** You have put a lot of work into planning the activity and now is the time to see that hard work pay off. Enjoy the activity and reflect on how you are supporting your community!
- **Ensure Volunteers are Having a Good Time:** Even if you have organized your volunteers in advance, be flexible — people may want to switch tasks or groups, and that's ok!
- **Showcase the Work You Are Doing:** Be sure to document the activity, particularly by taking photos. Time permitting, you can share your activity on social media as it is happening, or share photos afterwards. If you have established any media contacts, see if they can stop by the activity to share it with a wider audience.
- **Get Feedback:** Have volunteers and/or participants complete a short survey or feedback form after the activity, but before they go home. It may be harder to get this information from them once they have left the activity. Their feedback will help you improve when you plan future activities. You can ask questions such as:



- Did you feel your participation was valuable? Why or why not?
- Did you feel the activity was well organized? Why or why not?
- What was your favorite part of the activity? Why?
- How would you improve the activity?
- Thank Volunteers for Their Involvement: Make sure they understand the importance of their contribution and the impact of the activity.
- Thank Donors: Be sure to thank anyone who donated or lent resources for the activities.

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)

Step 5: Follow-Up

Measuring and evaluating the success of your activity will give you crucial data on how well your plans met your goals and if you made a difference in your community.

The volunteers or participants who were involved can form a great foundation for future community involvement activities you might plan. Be sure to keep in touch with them! Consider the following prompts to think through how you can continue your community engagement beyond one day.

If you planned an activity on behalf of an organization, such as a business or community group, think about how your organization might want to continue to be involved in community activities. You will probably need to talk to the organization's leadership to get their approval for additional activities — and the success of your first activity is a great opportunity to make the case for future activities! If possible, get approval for an ongoing program so that you don't need to get approval for each individual future activity.

Assess Your Level of Engagement:

Do you want to start planning community activities on an ongoing basis? Or on an infrequent basis? Would you rather not commit to additional activities, but perhaps instead share information with others via channels such as email or social media?

What Level of Involvement Is Right for You?

- I would like to hold more activities — on a weekly, monthly, or semi-annual basis
- I might plan another activity in the future, but I'm not sure how often.
- I will stay in contact with my volunteers or participants mainly by sharing information.
- Other

Evaluate Volunteer Needs:



Once you have a sense of what community engagement efforts you would like to undertake long-term, think about how your volunteer pool might be able to assist.

How to Keep Volunteers Engaged?

- Forming a community group that meets periodically
- Participating in future activities
- Recruiting additional participants
- Planning their own activities
- Other

Contact Volunteers:

Within a few days of the activity, be sure to contact volunteers and thank them again for their involvement. This is a great time to share success metrics, such as the number of people who participated, the number of trees planted, the volume of trash collected, etc. It's also a great opportunity to lay the foundation for ongoing communication. Let volunteers know what your plans are for future activities, and ask them to let you know if they would like to stay involved.

Establish a Communication Channel:

Once you know who would like to be involved in future activities, think about the best way to stay in contact with them. For example, you may want to create a WhatsApp group, an email list, or a Facebook group.

Don't Forget!

You now have a great resource at your disposal — a group of volunteers who are interested in contributing to future community engagement efforts! Be sure to stay in touch with them and make the most of this great opportunity to continue making a difference in your community.

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)



Suggested Timeline

Planning an activity can seem overwhelming, but it doesn't need to be. By mapping out when tasks should be completed, you can approach the planning in smaller pieces. Below is a suggested timeline for planning a YSEALI YOUNIFIED activity beginning **one month** before your targeted activity date.

WEEK 1:

- Identify a need in your community, and select a type of activity that could address that need
- Create a mission statement and goals for the activity
- Identify and reach out to potential partners
- Decide if the activity will be virtual or if it is safe and permissible to hold an in-person activity

WEEK 2:

- Set the date, time, and duration of the activity
- Set a location or platform (for virtual activities)
- Determine how many volunteers/participants you will need
- Identify any resources you will need
- Solicit donations if needed — for supplies, refreshments for volunteers, etc.

WEEK 3:

- Register your activity on the YOUNIFIED Padlet here
<https://padlet.com/youngsoutheastasianleaders/younified2021>
- Promote the activity
- Recruit volunteers and/or participants; set a time and means for organizing volunteers
- Continue to solicit donations if needed

WEEK 4:

- Notify local media about your activity
- Plan for the day of the activity



- Make a schedule
- Assign volunteer roles
- Communicate key information to volunteers
- Hold an orientation session with the volunteer leaders, if appropriate
- Double-check last minute details and make sure you are all set for the activity
- Send a reminder to volunteers and/or participants

DAY-OF:

- Hold your activity
 - Arrive early
 - Take photos
 - Collect feedback
- Keep track as activities are completed — make sure you'll be able to determine whether your activity met the goal you set

POST-ACTIVITY ACTIVITY:

- Promote the success of your activity — publicize it on social media or approach local media about featuring the activity (#YSEALI, #YOUNIFIED)
- Thank volunteers/participants and donors
- Think about ways to keep your volunteers engaged — and start planning a future activity!
- Report your activity on <https://asean.usmission.gov/yseali/yseali-younified/> to be eligible to receive YOUNIFIED certificate. This form will be available in January 2022.

[Return to the Table of Contents](#)